

Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign

EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response/Office of Solid Waste

Geographic location or area of activity: National

Description of activity: Every year, incidents occur in K-12 schools that expose students and staff to hazardous chemicals. These incidents can result in costly clean-ups, injuries and lost school days. Dangerous chemicals are used throughout schools by students, teachers and other staff for teaching chemistry concepts in: art classrooms; vocational shops such as automotive repair and printing; and facility maintenance such as cleaning and painting. The accidental or intentional release of chemicals presents a potential risk of fire, explosion and harmful toxic exposure to millions of school occupants. Proper chemical use and management (e.g., inventory, storage, labeling and disposal) is an essential health and safety issue facing schools.

The Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) is a partnership effort that brings together schools and the surrounding community to facilitate their common goal of creating a safe and healthy environment for children to learn and staff to teach. Through SC3 they aim to ensure that schools are free from hazards associated with mismanaged chemicals.

The SC3 approach is simple. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency leads the national program to assist schools in reducing acute and long-term chemical risks, thereby improving school safety. The SC3 strategy was developed through a collaborative effort among federal agencies to ensure that the program and all organizations benefit from multiple perspectives and expertise.

EPA is building a public/private partnership to make responsible chemical management available to all schools. This is accomplished through a partnership agreement which provides SC3 partners the opportunity to work with schools that need assistance with responsible chemical management. EPA provides the tools needed to facilitate this work. Partners come from a broad range of industry sectors including chemical companies, environmental services, colleges and universities, local government, emergency preparedness, and insurance companies, to name a few examples. The schools and partners work collaboratively to find long-term solutions to the issue of chemical management in schools.

Since the inception of the program in March 2007, SC3 has formed partnerships with five national associations, and 4 private companies from a broad industry cross section including environmental service to insurance companies.

In pilot programs leading up to the national launch, over 100,000 pounds of dangerous chemicals have been removed from schools, protecting over 400,000 students. We anticipate this number to grow through the efforts of our expanding partner network.

Interagency partners: Department of Education; National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health; National Institutes of Health; Bureau of Indian Affairs; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Local partners: American Chemistry Council; Cement Kiln Recycling Coalition; Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Association; American Chemical Society; North American Hazardous Materials Association; BASF – Whitestone; MKC Enterprises; Pollution Control Industries; Employers Mutual Casualty Company.

Activity URL: www.epa.gov/sc3